In the specification:

Background of the Invention

From the dawn of civilization people have directly transmitted information from one person to another. Information was first transmitted by speech and later by the written word. Writings enabled people to transmit information by messengers from a location in which the sender of the writing was present to another location where the receiver was present. In time, postal services were developed in which a person would deliver a letter to the post office (hereinafter "post") in one city and an agent of the post office would deliver that letter to a post office in another city, where the letter would be picked up by the person to whom the letter was sent.

One of the reasons why recipients of letters and packages rent post office boxes is that the recipient did not want the sender of the letter or package to know the actual location of the recipient. The above reason for having post office boxes has increased dramatically in the past few years because many people are conducting business out of their homes and they do not want certain senders of letters and packages to know the location of their homes. Thus, there has been a tremendous increase in the use of post office boxes. Consequently, the post at certain post offices is experiencing a shortage of post office boxes.

This invention overcomes the disadvantages of the prior art by providing a method that enables the post to deliver letters, flats, post cards and packages (mail) addressed to a recipient virtual post office box to be delivered directly to the recipient. The invention enables individuals or entities to rent a virtual post office (VPO) box i.e., a box that does not physically exist, from the post. Mail addressed to the virtual post office box would be captured by the post during the

post's sortation process and rerouted to the specified address of the renter of the virtual post office box.

An advantage of this invention is that a renter of a virtual post office box may receive mail at their specified location while this location will not be known to parties who send mail to the virtual post office box.

B 4

Page 4, line 17:
Referring now to the drawings in detail and more particularly to Fig. 1, the reference character 11 represents the entry of bulk entry mail to the post. The post receives and processesbulk entry mail and collection mail. Collection mail. will be described in the description of Fig. 2. Approximately 60 percent of the mail currently received by the United States Postal Service is bulk entry mail. Bulk entry mail is mail received by the post that is trayed, presorted, metered, bearing a permit or pre-cancelled stamp. Bulk entry mail that has been bar coded but not sorted correctly by the mailer will be scanned and sorted by bar code sorter/code printer 12. Mail that is able to be scanned and sorted by sorter 12 is sent to a delivery bar code sorter/code printer 13 or a carrier sequence bar code sorter 14. Sorter 13 sorts mail that is going to be delivered to other postal facilities. Sorter 14 sort the mail in the order that the mail is going to be delivered by postal carrier 15.

B 5

Page 8, line 2:
Fig. 3B is a drawing of a mail piece addressed to a virtual post office (VPO) box which the post has indicated the actual delivery address. Mail piece 36 has a sender address field 37 and material 38 that indicates the payment of the postage for mail piece 36. Material 38 may be a postal indicia, postal permit or one or more stamps. The recipient address field 39 will include the designation 40 for a virtual post office box and the box number i.e., VPO etc. and the number of the virtual post office box and the person or entity 41 to whom mail piece 36 is sent. The post will print the actual delivery address 42 that the lessee of the virtual post office box wants mail piece 36 delivered to. The post will also

print a posnet bar code 43 on the face of mail piece 36. Bar code 43 represents delivery address 42 in a coded form.

Page 8, lines 17 and 18:

Fig. 3D is a drawing of a mail piece addressed to a virtual post office (VPO) box with some actual address information and some vanity address information upon which the post has indicated the actual delivery address 42. Mail piece 36 has a sender address field 37 and material 38 that indicates the payment of the postage for mail piece 36. Material 38 may be a postal indicia, postal permit or one or more stamps. The recipient address field 39 will include the designation 40 for a virtual post office box and the box number i.e., VPO etc. and the number of the virtual post office box, the person or entity 41 to whom mail piece 36 is sent, the business entity 44 that the person represents, the city, state and zip code 45 of the business entity and a vanity location 46. The city, state and zip code 45 may be the actual city , state and zip code that mail piece 36 is going to be delivered to and location 46 may be a place within zip code 45 that is used for vanity purposes. The post will print the actual delivery address 42 that the lessee of the virtual post office box wants mail piece 36 delivery to. The post will also print a posnet bar code 43 on the face of mail piece 36. Bar code 36 represents delivery address 42 in a coded form.

Page 9, line 2:

Fig. 4 is a drawing showing how one may obtain a virtual post office box and how one may change the address to which the mail having a virtual post office box will be delivered. Mailers 50 may communicate their intentions regarding their virtual post office box via telephone, personal computer, facsimile, or by actually going to a post office.

Page 9, lines 23 and 25

If a mailer communicated with the post via a personal computer, the mailer may communicate with post office modem 52, which is coupled to data center

computer 54. Computer 54 and the mailer's personal computer may have various protocols that are known in the art that must be satisfied before the mailer's computer can exchange virtual post office box information with computer 54. After the protocols have been satisfied computer 54 may obtain enough information from the mailer's computer to complete the virtual post office receipt described in the description of Fig. 5 and/or forward mail piece 36 to a address different than the address that was originally supplied to the post, i.e., a location where someone is going on their vacation.

Page 10, line 10:
National name and address database 65 is coupled to national postal code database 66 and validate user request process 62. Database 65 includes the names and addresses of people and entities residing in the United States. National postal code database 66 includes every valid postal deliverable address in the United States. Change request database 67 is coupled to virtual post office box name/address relational database 68. Database 65 is used as a reference for database 68 and changes to database 68 are received from change request database 67. Postal code updates computer 70 will transmit new zip codes to national code database 68 via modem 60, computer 54, process 62 and process 69. Name or address updates computer 71 will transmit new name or address changes to database 65 via modem 60, computer 54, process 62 and process 69.

Page 11, line 20:
The date in which the lessee of the virtual post office box wants mail to be delivered to the temporary delivery address 222 is shown in space 208 and the date which the lessee of the virtual post office box no longer wants mail to be delivered to the temporary delivery address 222 is shown in space 209. The signature of the person who is registering the virtual post office box or the authorized representative of the entity who is registering the virtual post office box will be placed in space 213. The date the signature was signed in space 213 is indicated in space 214. A biometrics 215 of the person whose signature

appears in space 213 may also be placed on card 200. Biometrics 215 may be: a picture of the person signing in space 213; the person's fingerprint; etc.

Page 13, line 5:
Fig. 3 is a drawing of a flow chart showing the generation of a statement by access metering and billing process 69. The program begins in block 150 where a statement initiation process is begun. Then the program goes to block 151 where the current fees for the requested services are transmitted. Now the program goes to block 152 where data center computer 54 sorts the transactions metered by process 69 and records the transactions by specific mailers and the post. Next in block 153 computer 54 converts each transaction type to a cost. In block 154 computer 54 totals the cost for each specified mailer and the post. The program goes to block 155 to reset the account registers. In block 156 the program produces a done message upon completion of the task. Next in block 157 a printer (not shown) at data center 75 produces statements for the provided services. Then the program goes to block 158 to indicate that the printed statements are completed. At this point the program goes back to the input of block 150.